

'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

That all sounds very confronting! Sell all your possessions. That sounds like that would cause a few of us some anxiety! Is that what Jesus is asking us? To give up everything? I would think this was cause for alarm! It is a shame that we missed the middle section of this part of Luke's Gospel in the lectionary over the last few weeks. 2 weeks ago we had the Lord's Prayer, last week we had the parable of the rich man who was not rich towards God and this week we have to sell all of our possessions and give alms. It seems that the writer of Luke is pretty consistent in what God is asking for - God wants all of who

you are. Every last bit. God doesn't care about material possessions and material goods do not give status or specialness in the Kingdom of God. But it all sound pretty scary. It is almost like God doesn't understand what it is to be human. All of these things we are asked to do will send the majority of us into an anxiety spiral and the other half tempted to throw the baby out with the bath water because it just all sounds too hard. What the lectionary has missed falls between the rich man and today's Gospel.

'He said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of

life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.'

God knows that we are worried and that we need material possessions to get by. We are not told necessarily to give up everything - but rather to look at what we treasure. If your greatest treasure is your bank balance and your new car -

then perhaps Jesus is right. We should give up what controls us and keeps us apart from God. Material goods should not be what we strive towards. Like Martha and her jobs becoming her goals instead of her relationship with Christ. Material possessions should not be our goal at the end of the day. Our goal should be the Kingdom of heaven - which is of peace, joy, love and acceptance. And our method of getting the Kingdom to come (Lord's Prayer) is to love each other as much as we possibly can and to never stop forgiving. To let God's love shine through our lives and into the lives of others. We are told in the Gospel to be dressed for action. Dressed in love and forgiveness, which is far more beautiful than any outfit in the fashion industry. And we are told in the Gospel that this is not a job for tomorrow - but for today. Right now. This is how we are 'dressed for action' when we make a conscious decision to help bring about God's

Kingdom by acting with love, joy, and generosity everyday of our lives.

It's funny. We humans are driven by scarcity. Limited good. This concept from the Ancient Mediterranean is the idea that everything is limited. Wheat is limited, air is limited, water is limited, land is limited. This all sounds pretty normal so far. But one step further. Honour is limited, shame is limited and love is limited. For example in this society, when someone is given honour - it means that someone has had honour removed from them. Imagine your love as a pie chart. Now portion out your love to each person you care about. Now imagine someone new comes into your life. The only way you can fit them in is to take some of the love given to someone else.

We know this isn't the way that loves or the world works. But that doesn't stop kids getting jealous when the new baby comes along or

adults, when a new friend joins their circle. Why are we so frightened that we will miss out on something?? This fear of scarcity causes us to stockpile what we have so that we never miss out. Living like this means that we move away from God and start looking out for number one. Me. Self reliant and self made. No longer is there room for God, because we are so frightened that we will miss out, that we stop caring about those around us. This is how wars are started. Family feuds. Relationship breakdowns. Not just between you and others, but between you and God.

The God shown in the Gospel of Christ is a God of abundance. Think of the feeding of the 5000. There is enough of God to go around. God knows that we worry that we will miss out or be left wanting, that we will build bigger and better barns, we will stockpile our money for a rainy day and we will put off changing our ways until

tomorrow. And we all know that tomorrow never comes.

We are told not to store up things here on earth where they will gather dust, rust and be eaten by moths. These things are merely small comforts on the larger journey of life. Sell your possessions - all the things that keep you apart from God, and give alms (remember in the Ancient world 'charity' meant something different. Instead of giving to the needy - it was seen as restoring balance to the world by giving back the dignity that society has taken away). Jesus tells us to set our minds on the Kingdom of God. 'Where our treasure is, then our hearts will be also.'

In other words, work out what is really important to you. Is it God? Is it a new car? Is it your family? Is it an ipod400? Is it stockpiling for a rainy day? What is it? Because there you will find your heart. There you will find your desires and

motivations. If you are in love with your possessions - best do something about it and help restore balance to society.

So where is your heart? As Christian people our heart should be set on God and all of the things that we know to be good. Our families, our friends, the love and respect that we show each other. Making the world a better place. Giving honour and dignity to all. Not just some, all - even if we don't know their names. Don't let possessions get in the way of relationships and loving each other. Family breakdowns over money.... As Christian people, we need to ask ourselves where our treasure is. For so many of us, our treasure is with our God, through our friends and family. Through our family here in this place. Our Church community is important. We are to be the tangible face of Christ in the world. When people ask - 'where is God in the world' they should be able to point to St. Paul's. A community that welcome warmly, love

creatively, build each other up in support, welcome the children, visit the sick and aged, give to the less fortunate, people who have a strong voice of love in the community.

This should be important to each one of us. Building up the Body of Christ here in Ashgrove should be important to us and a message of love to the community. Is it important to you? If it is - trust in a God of generosity and abundance. You will not miss out.

So I say - Make your relationship with God important today - don't wait until tomorrow. Be dressed for action today. Walk out of this building clothed in love, peace, generosity and humility. Clothed in Christ. Our goal in life as Christian people is to better understand the nature of God and bring about the Kingdom, and the way we do it is to live in radical love.